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INCENSE BURNER



INCENSE BURNER

SUNG

TWO CELADON INCENSE BURNERS.

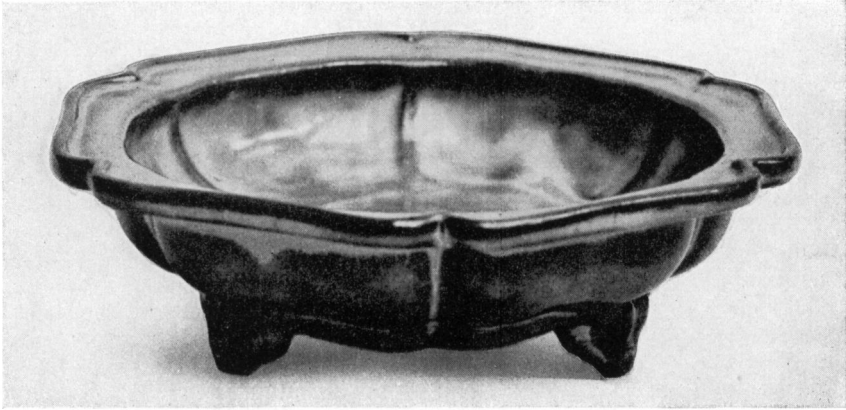
THE two incense burners illustrated are of celadon ware of a type highly prized for the delicacy and rarity of its color. In contrast to the gray greens and olive greens, usually thought of as typical celadon colors, these pieces have a decidedly bluish tinge, which calls to mind the instructions given by Shih Tsung (954-960) for the manufacture of the early *Ch'ai* ware—that its color be “the blue (*ch'ing*) of the sky after rain.” The reproduction of the blue tone of the celebrated *Ch'ai* ware was no doubt the aim of Chinese potters through many succeeding centuries. The soft and delicate colors of the type exemplified in our two pieces appealed particularly to the refined taste of the Zen philosophers of the Sung age. The forms, based upon bronzes of classic antiquity, and the severely simple decorations, are also in harmony with Sung culture, which prided itself upon elegance and refinement and regarded ostentation as being abominable.

The paste of both pieces is white, hard and of fine texture. The glaze is thick, but evenly distributed. Decorative lines which have been sparingly modeled in the paste are all but

submerged in the deep glaze, and show through merely as white lines. The paste also shows white at the rims and feet, there being no appreciable suggestion of the red or “iron” feet frequently seen on celadon pieces. The glaze is not crackled.

To attempt a definite classification of such ware, is, in the present state of knowledge, largely a matter of speculation. On the basis of certain quotations, these two pieces may, however, be tentatively classified as *Chang Lung-ch'üan yao*, that is, ware made by the younger of the Chang brothers at Lung-ch'üan. The Chang brothers were Sung potters, celebrated for the fineness of their celadon wares. The product of the younger Chang differed from that of the elder in having no crackle.¹ It appears also to have had a thinner body and to have been made of finer material than that used in the ordinary celadon wares. The *Ch'ing pi ts'ang* gives the following description of pieces made by the brothers Chang: “There is one kind in the manufacture of which white clay is used, and the surface of the ware is covered with *ts'ui* [kingfisher, i. e., bluish green] glaze through which the white

(1) Hobson, p. 76. I am also indebted to the same authority for the two quotations which follow.



CHÜN YAO BULB BOWL

SUNG

shows in faint patches. This is what was made by the Chang family in the Sung dynasty and is called *Chang yao*. Compared with the Lung-ch'üan ware in style and make, it gives the impression of greater delicacy and refinement." The author of the *Ch'un feng t'ang sui pi* says that it was "single-colored and pure, like beautiful jade, and ranking with the *Kuan yao*; whereas the *Ko yao* was pale in color."

The celadon colors are the result of the presence of iron oxide in the glaze; and it is probable that, like many of the other Sung glazes, they were first accidentally produced by the unsuspected presence of iron compounds, as impurities, either in the glaze or in the paste. Most of the specimens of Lung-ch'üan ware have burned red or red brown at the foot and rim, where the paste is exposed to the fire, due to the presence of iron in the clay. If we are to accept the *Ch'ing pi ts'ang* as authoritative, the natural conclusion is that the Chang brothers had discovered some method of purifying the paste, or that they secured supplies from outside sources which were relatively free from iron.

A CHÜN YAO BOWL

THE ware called *Chün yao*, made at Chün-chou in Honan during the Sung period, was not highly prized by ancient Chinese scholars, who admired the elegant and quiet tones of the *Ting yao* and of the older *Ch'ai*, *Ju*, and the allied celadon wares, rather than the comparatively brilliant coloring of the Chün. The latter was not usually made in the classic bronze forms and was intended to serve only commonplace utilitarian purposes, as vessels for flowers or bulbs. With the passing of time, *Ch'ai* and *Ju* have practically vanished—their very types are disputed—and the finer examples of Sung wares contemporary with the Chün—*Ting*, *Kuan* and *Lung-ch'üan*—have become exceedingly rare. This circumstance and a reversion of modern taste toward the more colorful types of glazes, have combined to make *Chün yao* the most popular of the Chinese wares known to collectors of the present time.

The specimen of *Chün yao* in the Museum's collection, which is illustrated herewith, is a bulb bowl with moulded six-foil sides, having a flanged mouth with rolled edges and